



**Idaho
Children's
Trust Fund**

Check Child Abuse



How to Prevent Child Abuse & Neglect

(before it ever happens)

**Your Important Role in
Safeguarding Our Children**

Idaho Children's Trust Fund
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You Are Important!

Children are our greatest treasure. As adults, we have a special responsibility to safeguard children against abuse and neglect. Ultimately, it's better to prevent child abuse *before it happens* than to repair the damage afterwards. But we need your help.

This brochure is designed to help you become part of the "**prevention solution**." You'll learn how to guard against child abuse, how to spot the danger signs, and what to do if you suspect abuse is happening. You don't need to be an expert. All you need is a caring heart and the desire to help. For more information, call us at (208) 386-9317

or call the Idaho Care Line **2-1-1**

Facts and Figures

The cost of child abuse and neglect in the United States is over \$100 billion annually or about \$4.5 billion in Idaho alone. (Prevent Child Abuse America, 2008)

Every day, on average, 30 new cases of child abuse or neglect are reported in Idaho. Over 80% of cases of physical abuse and neglect are perpetrated by parents of the children. Children under the age of 4 are most vulnerable. (Facts, Figures and Trends 2007-8, Idaho Department of Health and Welfare and Child Maltreatment 2008)

Experts estimate that one in four girls and one in six boys are sexually molested before their 18th birthday. The Idaho 2009 Child Sexual Abuse Statistics Report shows a 24% increase in reported child sexual abuse cases in the last year. (Idaho Attorney General's Office 2009) 93% of all victims know their abusers. (Darkness to Light d2l.org)

Who is affected? Boys and girls, teens and toddlers – even babies. All races and ethnic groups, from the inner city to affluent suburbs. Simply put, every child is vulnerable to abuse. The good news is that we can reduce the danger by *working together*.

Useful Definitions

Knowledge is power, especially when it comes to protecting our children. It's helpful to start with some basic definitions:

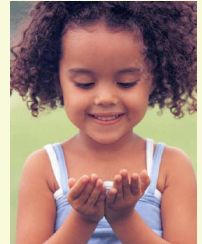
Physical Abuse – Any non-accidental injury to a child. Physical abuse may include, but is not limited to, burning, beating, kicking and punching. There *could* be physical evidence of bruises, burns, broken bones or other unexplained injuries.

Sexual Abuse – Any intentional touching or close contact that can be reasonably construed as being for the purpose of sexual arousal, gratification, or any other improper purpose. It includes accosting, soliciting, or enticing a child to commit sexual acts.

Child Maltreatment – The treatment of a child that involves cruelty or suffering that a reasonable person would recognize as excessive. It may include humiliation, severe punishment and other actions.

Mental Injury Abuse – A pattern of physical or verbal acts by a parent or caregiver that results in psychological or emotional injury to a child. Examples of such injury could include depression, anxiety, lack of attachment, psychosis, fear of abandonment, fear of impending death, etc. Mental injury can also be caused by the omission of affection and other basic emotions.

Child Neglect – Includes *physical neglect* (not providing reasonable food, clothing and shelter); *failure to protect* (knowingly allowing another person to abuse or neglect a child); *improper supervision* (placing the child in danger); *abandonment* (leaving a child without an agreement for the child's safety); and *medical neglect* (harm from failure to seek or obtain medical care).



Child abuse and neglect prevention is an adult responsibility

7 Easy Ways to Help

Preventing child abuse isn't "rocket science." You don't need an advanced degree or professional training to make a difference. Here are seven simple ways you can get started today!

1. **Take care of yourself** so you can be a good caregiver. We live in very stressful times and raising children is a big job. Have a pre-arranged plan for what to do when you find yourself becoming angry or upset. Adult's responsibility keeps children safe.
2. **Get to know your neighbors.** Encourage a friendly supportive spirit among parents in the area. If a parent appears to be struggling, offer reassurance and support, or just a friendly ear for listening.
3. **Think carefully** about where your children spend most of their time. Eliminate or reduce one adult/one child situations. More than 80% of child sexual abuse cases happen in these situations.
4. **Teach your young children** the names of their body parts. Teach your child that it is against the "rules" for adults to act in a sexual way with them. Children often keep abuse a secret, but barriers can be broken down by talking openly.
5. **Talk regularly** with your children about all aspects of their safety, from crossing the street or being home alone to avoiding older siblings and classmates who bully.
6. **Be a friend to a child** you know. Remember their names and show them you care. Pay attention to the children around you, even if they aren't yours. Listen quietly. Children have a hard time telling parents or other adults about troubling events.
7. **Support and attend** educational programs at your local school, community organization or church to learn prevention strategies that help keep all of our children safe, healthy and happy



Prevention Works!

Warning Signs

Every parent knows that raising a child can be difficult at times. No one ever achieves "perfection" when it comes to parenting. On the other hand, there's a big difference between normal parenting mistakes and serious abuse or neglect. Here are some common warning signs that abuse or neglect *may* be happening.

Warning Signs of Physical Abuse:

- A pattern of injuries over time
- Fearful behavior by the child
- Caregivers who are physically abusive or angry
- Unexplained bruises, welts or cuts

Warning Signs of Emotional Abuse:

- Excessively fearful or shy behavior
- Persistent anti-social behavior (e.g., very aggressive)
- Children who constantly try to "parent" other kids
- Regression – older children acting much younger
- Harsh, belittling or manipulative caregiver behavior

Warning Signs of Sexual Abuse:

- An STD or pregnancy before age 14
- Stained, bloody or torn underclothes
- Injury to the genital area
- Children who have age-inappropriate knowledge about sex or interest in sexual acts
- Extreme passive or aggressive behavior
- Self-destructive behavior such as substance abuse, self-mutilation or suicide attempts
- Often, there are no signs at all.

Warning Signs of Neglect:

- Chronically bad hygiene, such as very dirty or matted hair, persistent body odor, etc.
- Poorly fitting clothes that are dirty/ disheveled
- Children who appear to be unsupervised
- Substance abuse or reckless disregard by caregivers

Report Child Abuse

Who is required to Report Child Abuse?

Idaho law says that any person who has reason to believe that a child is being abused, neglected, or abandoned **MUST** report this to your local law enforcement agency or the Department of Health and Welfare within 24 hours.

CALL

Idaho Care Line 2-1-1

or call 1-800-926-2588 or the POLICE 9-1-1

Reasonable suspicion of abuse can be based on:

- Witnessing the abuse yourself
- Noticing the warning signs of abuse in a child
- When an adult, parent or child confides in you

If a child confides in you, remember **R.O.L.E.** First **Reassure** the child that it was the right thing to tell you. **Overcome** the desire to over-react or talk negatively about the abuser. **Listen**, don't lead the conversation. **Encourage** the child by saying you *will* help them. Then follow through by calling the number above.



The mission of the Idaho Children's Trust Fund is to support and coordinate efforts within the state that are designed to strengthen families in order to prevent the occurrence of child abuse and neglect.

We invite you to join us in this important work and to thank the thousands of Idahoans who generously donated over \$88,000 through their 2008 Idaho State Tax Forms.

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JOIN US!